

More than 105,896 citizens request a GMO FREE CATALONIA CATALONIA says NO to GMOs

Press release, 20 August 2008

The people of Catalonia do not approve genetically modified organisms (GMOs). On 20th August, more than 105,896 signatures against GMOs were delivered to the catalan Parliament.

The signatures have to be validated by the Catalan Statistics Institute (IDESCAT) and afterwards, by the end of October, the proposed law will enter the parliamentary procedure, with the presentation of motions and the debate of the law. After that, with the agreement of the platform, a final debate in the Parliament will take place at the beginning of January.

In September, the platform will initiate contacts with all the parliamentary groups, to know the position of each one and also to deliver them documents and any other requested information.

Evaluating the campaign

The platform wants to let everyone know his evaluation of the campaign of gathering of signatures.

1. We evaluate as very positive the support of the citizens. This has made possible that we gathered a number of signatures almost the double of was requested for the law to be discussed in the Parliament.

2. We understand that these 105 896 signatures gathered until today are a very representative sample of the catalan people and are a democratic expression of a general rejection to GMOs, very different from the not quite democratic practices by the GMO multinational companies.

3 We request the catalan government to consider people's will, and we point out the fact that there is an important and growing amount of aware consumers who reject GMOs and want another agricultural and food system.

4. We emphasize the awesome response the catalan society has given to this campaign against GMOs, which was amazing for the platform.

5. We value also the information campaign that has taken place, which has made possible to open the debate, not only about GMOs, but also about the whole agricultural and food model, and about possible harms of these technologies on people's health.

6. We provide to everyone interested documents, research, articles and bibliography about the consequences of GMOs on health, society and economy, agriculture and the environment.

<http://www.somloquesembrem.org/index2.php?actual=11>

<http://www.somloquesembrem.org/index3.php?actual=11&actual2=34>

PRESS COMMUNICATION ON THE CAMPAIGN

On February 1st, the "Law proposal to ban growing GMOs in Catalonia" was admitted to procedure by the Mesa of the Parliament of Catalonia. By the end of the month, on February 29th, started the gathering of signatures which in the course of 120 working days had to attain at least 50.000 signatures of citizens older than 16 years registered in Catalonia, so that the law can be discussed in the Parliament. Last June the Mesa of the Parliament granted 15 more days as prorogation so that the final date for the end of the campaign was set on August 21st.

The initiative

The initiative to start a campaign to declare Catalonia GMOs free arises in the country area in mid 2007, specifically from a group of farmers members of the Farmers Assembly of Catalonia (Assamblea Pagesa de Catalunya).

There are three factors that drove the Farmers Assembly of Catalonia to promote this campaign about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs):

- > The repeated contamination of the fields of the last farmer who was growing organic corn with local varieties in Catalonia.
- > The contamination of organic calf in different farms in the Pallars (Catalan region), fact that showed how GMOs were entering the trophic chain.
- > The accusation, and later sentence, against Josep Pàmies, for a denouncement action against the corn variety Bt176, banned in France, and later in Spain, for his harmful effects on human health.

The "Som lo que Sembrem" (We Are What We Sow) platform

Som lo que Sembrem is a hand held out by the rural world to the urban one, by the producers to the consumers. Som lo que Sembrem was born in 2007, after contacts were established in all Catalan regions. This allowed the platform to be set up formally on March the 2nd. The goal of the platform is to achieve a fair agriculture, the respect for the environment and a guarantee for consumers' health. This is why it understands that we have to get rid of GMOs. It does not consider itself an ecological organization but the coalition of different perspectives brought forward by the different associations that constitute it (health related, nutritional, economical, agricultural, environmental), nor either an organization only of Lleida (Catalan province) but from whole Catalonia

The platform is formed by:

- More than 80 organizations (trade unions, cooperatives, cultural organizations, companies, technical schools, farm organizations, ecological groups, NGOs, neighbours' associations, naturalist groups, etc.)
- More than 50 persons as private individuals.
- More than 1000 collaborators in all Catalonia.
- More than 160 signatures collecting places in public establishments all over Catalonia.
- 19 territorial branches that reached all Catalan regions (regions of Girona, Berguedà, Alt Urgell and Cerdanya, Pallars, Vall d'Aran and Ribagorça, Terres de Ponent (Western Lands), Osona, Vallès Oriental and Vallès Occidental, Maresme, Barcelonès and Baix Llobregat, Central Catalonia, Anoia, Garraf, Alt Penedès and Baix Penedès, Alt Camp, Camp de Tarragona, Priorat and Ribera d'Ebre, Terres de l'Ebre).
- The main office is in Balaguer, but it has offices in Girona, Sabadell and Barcelona.

Several personalities give support to the platform: chefs like Santi Santamaria, singers like Lluís Llach, writers like Isabel Clara-Simó or movie directors like Bigas Luna, politicians like Àngel Ros (Lleida's Major), deputies like Agnès Pardell (PSC), Raül Romeva (ICV), Miquel Àngel Estradé and Uriel Bertran (ERC) or Roman Galimany (CiU); as well as scientists like José Ramon Olarieta (ETSEA, Lleida's University), Miquel Vallmitjana (biotechnologist), the same Roman Galimany (biochemist and executive president of the hospital of Valls), Martí Boada (UAB), Teresa Forcades (nun and doctor in medicine), and also personalities of social movements like Pep Riera (Farmers Assembly), Joan Caball (Farmers Union), Pep Puig (anti-nuclear movement) and a long list more.

The proposal of law and the Popular Legislative Initiative (PLI)

The goal of the "Som lo que Sembrem" platform was to let know GMOs problems on health, agriculture and environment and to promote a law proposal framed by the participation law (Law 1/2006, 16th February, about Popular Legislative Initiative, DOGC num 4579-23/02/2006).

The law establishes as a condition to collect 50 000 signatures within 120 days, so that the law proposal gets the support of the citizenship and can be debated in the Catalan Parliament.

Som lo que Sembrem proposed a law based on four basic aspects:

- To declare Catalonia as GMOs free region.
- Immediate ban of transgenic crops.
- Clear labels on products which have used GMO at any stage of its production and those which have not.
- Moratorium to GMO development in our land and research on their effects.

With these four aspects on February the 29th (2008) started the gathering of signatures. The gathering had as its cornerstone the "fedataris" – persons officially accredited by the Parliament – who have a very essential function in an ILP and were up to 300. Few ILPs have had so many accredited people and so widespread all over Catalonia.

The platform started his acts in December 2007 and by the end of August 2008 has reached more than 500 acts in all Catalonia

The gathering of signatures finish on August 21st and there are 105 896 signatures gathered, and delivered to the Catalan Parliament for validation.

Information about GMO

The platform makes available to all citizens different documents, investigations, links, bibliography and other aspects that are the basis of the position on GMOs of Som lo que Sembrem. There citizens will find researches about GMOs effects on human health, on the environment, their repercussions on farming, nutrition and the social and economic consequences in the Third World.

You will find all this information on our website: <http://www.somloquesembrem.org>